

LAOS

- I. Presence UN subcommittee has not deterred Communists from continuing small-scale attacks in scattered areas of country.
- II. However, pattern recent Communist activity suggests definite switch in tactics as result of UN presence.
- A. Skirmishing in northern provinces has declined, and Laotian army sources claim units suspected of including North Vietnamese elements have withdrawn across border.
- B. At same time, guerrilla attacks by indigenous Communist forces reportedly on upswing, particularly in heretofore relatively quiet southern Laos.
- C. Such activity would have immediate purposes of forcing redeployment of Laotian army forces, now concentrated in the north, and of lending credence to Communist claims of a country-wide popular uprising against the Phoui government.
- III. Endemic bad feeling between Phoui government and French representatives in Vientiane has taken further turn for worse.
- A. Phoui complained again last week over French role in Laos and said the French training mission in Laos has done little but place road blocks in the way of developing army into effective fighting force.
- B. Laotians upset by tendency French belittle their claims of North Vietnamese involvement in present fighting and French efforts blame "internal uprising" on Phoui government's alleged failure undertake necessary reforms.

25X1

DOCUMENT NO. 18  
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☒  
DECLASSIFIED  
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C  
NEXT REVIEW DATE: 12-18-77  
AUTH: HR 70-2  
DATE: 12-18-77  
REVIEWER: [ ]

~~SECRET~~

C. French military attaché, despite earlier promise to American ambassador to be discreet, recently told Argentine delegate on the UN subcommittee that there has been no real foreign military intervention in Laos and that Laos' appeal to UN was possibly inspired by policy aims of "certain large power."

D. French highly exercised over article by New York Times reporter McGregor alleging that the Laotian government planned to end the special position of France after current crisis subsides.

25X1X

E.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] While doubtful Phoui would ever take such extreme step, incident does point up his strong anti-French feelings.

25X1X

IV. French Ambassador Gassouin continuing to express view that Laotian problem not military but largely stems from ineptness of government <sup>Gassouin emphasizing</sup> and to emphasize lack of evidence of real foreign military intervention, Paris however possibly does not realize the extent to which French-Laotian relations have deteriorated.

A. Couve de Murville, / above local dissension, either does not realize or rises above local French action in Laos.

V. The British Foreign Office, while approving continuation of UN presence, emphasizes that a military solution is impossible and some form of negotiations are necessary.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

- A. This opinion said to be endorsed at <sup>ministerial</sup> ~~military~~ level.
  - B. British thinking in terms of a UN Security Council invitation to Laos and North Vietnam to comment on the ultimate report of the subcommittee, and then perhaps negotiate new settlement.
- VI. UN subcommittee, after slow start, now getting down to business of studying Laos' charges of North Vietnamese involvement.
- A. Subcommittee to leave shortly for flying tour of northern area, but how extensive and thorough its field inspection will be is problematical.
    - 1. Hammarskjold has advised subcommittee not to use any helicopters or pilots from permanent Security Council members or from countries bordering Laos.
  - B. Subcommittee reported in bad humor over austere life in Vientiane, usual stomach complaints, and inefficiency of government in handling administrative arrangements.
    - 1. Abrupt departure of Tunisian member Bourguiba last Tuesday in order to advise on Algerian problem may have bad effect on colleagues and cause them to think about leaving soon.

~~SECRET~~

## Laos' Army Gains, Using Reds' Tactics

By GREG MacGREGOR

Special to The New York Times.

VIENTIANE, Laos, Sept. 20

—Reports from the northern provinces last week indicated that the new Laotian military tactics of "hitting below the belt" had rebel leaders confused and indignant.

In the last fortnight Government troops have been ordered to "throw away the book" and fight the enemy with his own tactics. Disregarding one of the codes of modern warfare, the Laotian soldiers put aside their uniforms and donned peasants' garb.

Concealing their weapons and ammunition during the day, they have fought back at the Communist forces from unexpected bases at night, often leading the enemy to withdraw in confusion.

Gen. Ouane Rathkone, Army Chief of Staff, said today that except for occasional small guerrilla raids the entire fighting area in Samneua and Phongsaly Provinces was quiet. He said Government troops were making minor advances in small platoon formations and no strong resistance had been encountered in the last few days. He did not deny the possibility that the Pathet Lao and other Communist forces might be withdrawing to regroup for a determined thrust before the United Nations fact-finding subcommittee heads north for the trouble areas.

A spokesman for the United Nations team, which has been here since last Tuesday, implied yesterday that its members would visit Samneua in the latter part of this week.

A number of wounded Laotian soldiers were brought to hospitals here in the last few days. Their arrival discounted private French Embassy assertions that no real fighting had taken place and that press reports of the conflict were gross exaggerations, based on Laotian and United States propaganda.

Among the 110 seriously wounded men in military wards today was Sgt. 2/c Siani Vong, who was wounded three times at Sam Teu Sept. 12. Sergeant Siani, 20 years old but looking more like 15, had two bullet wounds in his left leg and one in the groin.

### Soldiers Appear Stunned

His bed was one of twenty in a dimly lighted, poorly ventilated ward of a creaking frame hospital. His face bore the same shocked expression as those of other wounded men lying near by. They reflected an air of unreality, as if asking: "Why am I here? What is happening?"

"We kept out of sight in the jungle for fifteen days just out of Sam Teu," the sergeant explained slowly and painfully.

"We had no tents, we just lived and ate in the jungle and waited for what we were told was coming," he went on.

"We were told we had Pathet Lao all around us, but we kept in small groups and never saw enemy soldiers until one night when my platoon was caught and the earth seemed to open with fire."

In the same ward other victims of the Communist drive against Laos provided incontestable evidence of the severity of the fighting.

### French Attitude Irks Laotians

The French attitude toward the Laotian Government during this crisis has been deeply resented at high levels here.

Various Laotian Government leaders have said privately that the French have been attempting to undermine the morale of both the civilian populace and the military forces since the Communist offensive began in July. They charged that the French, who were long in control here, did little or nothing to train the Laotian forces and now were resisting any attempts by the United States to assist Laos directly without going through French military channels.

High Laotian Government circles indicated that relations between the Royal Government and the French representatives here had reached the breaking point. There were reports that if the current Communist menace was overcome and the United States continued to support Laos, her main relations with France would be severed.

From the late Eighteen Nineties until 1954, Laos was largely under French rule. In recent years she has retained close ties with France, based mainly on her cultural and colonial background.

## LAOTIAN PREMIER PREDICTS VICTORY

Sees Rebel Threat Ending in  
'Several Months' if North  
Vietnam Holds Off

By GREG MacGREGOR

Special to The New York Times.

VIENTIANE, Laos, Sept. 26 — Premier Phoui Sananikone declared today that Government forces could wipe out guerrilla and Pathet Lao opposition within "several months."

The Premier added in an interview here, however, that if Pathet Lao and other rebel forces now fighting against the Government were aided by North Vietnam, the situation would become more serious. In that case, he said, increased help would be needed from friendly countries.

The Premier also said, in reply to a question, that his Government would accept the "solutions proposed by the United Nations organization."

He said he was confident that the United Nations Security Council's subcommittee conducting an inquiry into Laotian charges that the rebels were being aided by North Vietnam would find adequate proof of such intervention.

### Warns of Situation

"If the Pathet Lao rebels remain unassisted in their attacks against the Government, the war will end in several months," the Premier declared. "Our army will destroy them easily."

"But if, on the other hand, they are aided by Vietminh troops, as they were recently, the situation could become serious. The policy of the Royal Government will be decided in accordance with events."

The Premier said there had been some concern in Government circles recently over

French policy here and whether a change had been directed for future French-Laotian relations. He said he felt these relations were historically too close to be altered.

"It has come to me that certain French circles in Vientiane do not share our point of view on the present problems," he said. "Can we deduce from this a change in French policy?"

"I think, as far as I am concerned, that French-Laotian friendship is too old, that it is upheld by too many factors, to change. The Laos are not superficial people. They think things over deeply."

The Premier, who spoke in French throughout the interview, concluded by expressing the gratitude of the Laotian Government and people for United States aid during the current crisis.

"As far as America is concerned, the Royal Lao Government is very grateful for morale, and material aid given to us in the present circumstances," the stocky Premier said.

"The Lao people recognize the efforts the United States has made to safeguard peace in the world," he said. "As leader of the free world, America has enormous responsibilities. Laos thanks your nation for having backed them up in defending a little country like our own."